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(57) A shuttle for a safety line 1 comprises a body 3 having a bore and a slot narrower than the bore opening to the exterior of the body, a load member 23 for attachment of a worker's harness connected pivotally to body 3, the body having a centre of gravity such that when the shuttle is on a safety line 1 the body is urged by gravity to adopt a particular orientation. This enables the body to be correctly aligned for passing a line support 2 such that its pillar 5 passes through the slot in body 3 without snagging: guide surfaces 12A,B, may cooperate with camming surfaces on body 3 to facilitate this. The pivotal attachment of member 23 allows the shuttle to pass freely regardless of where the worker is located relative to the line 1.

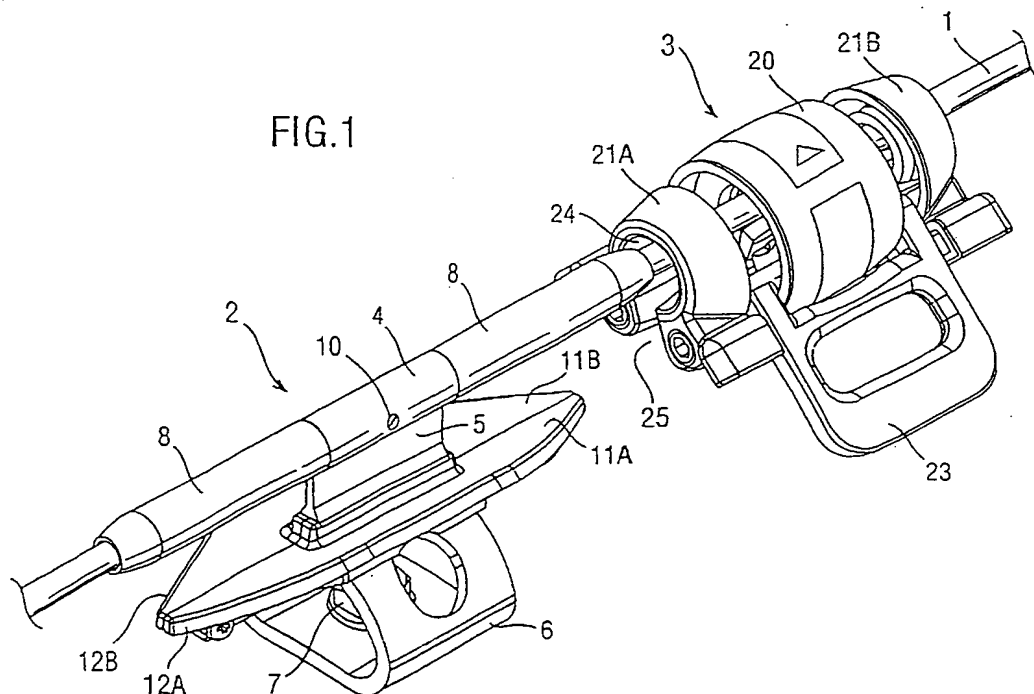


FIG.1

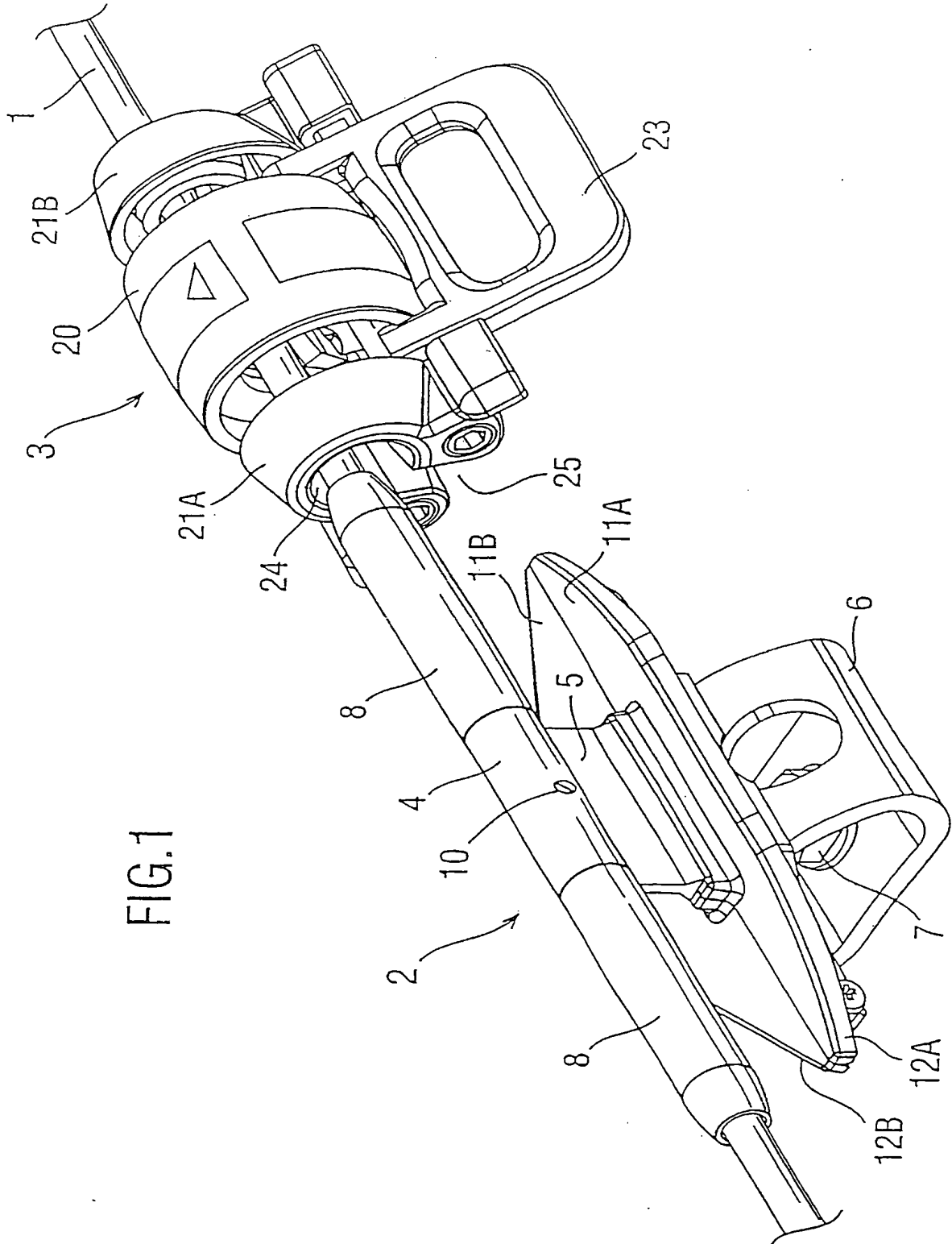
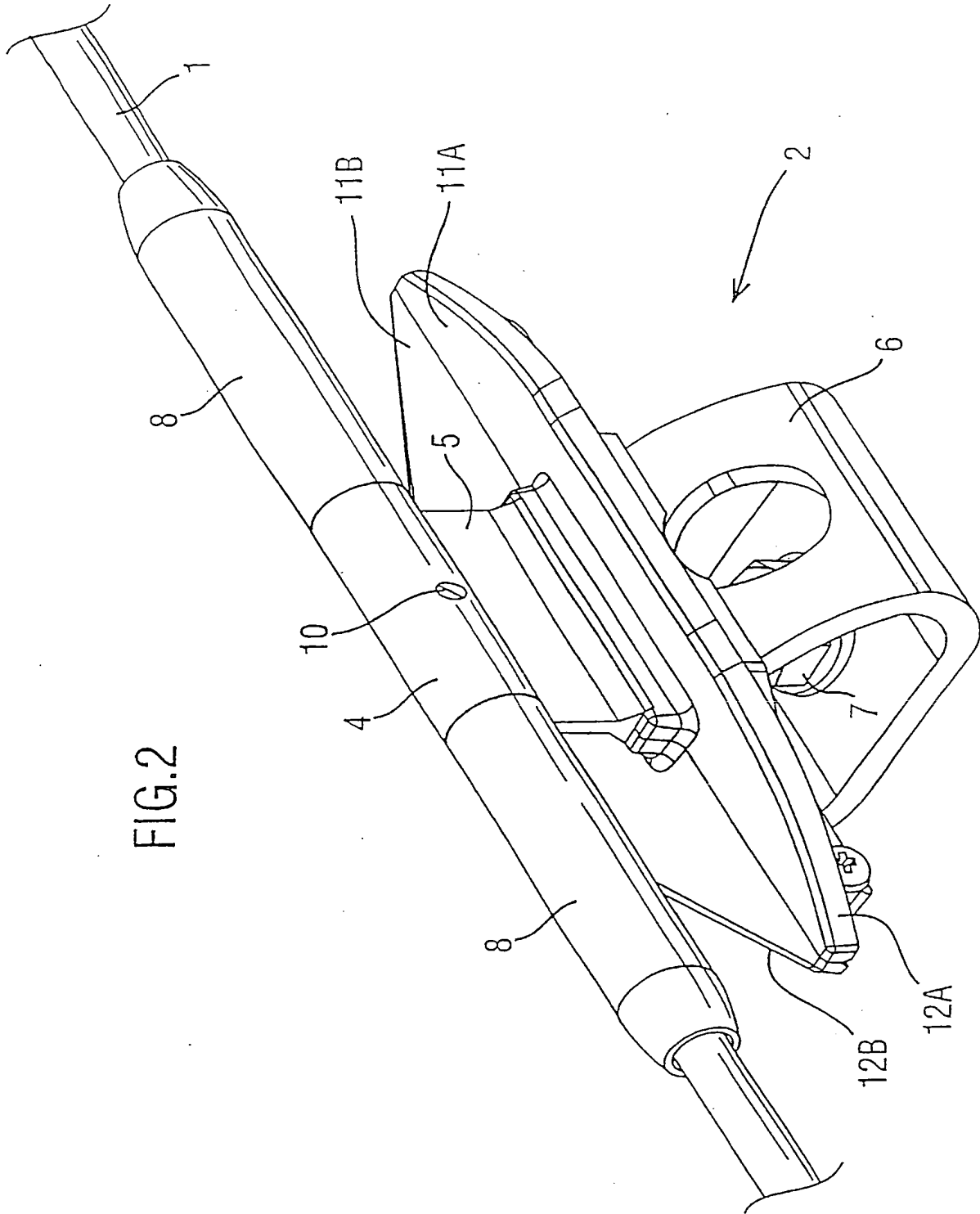


FIG.2



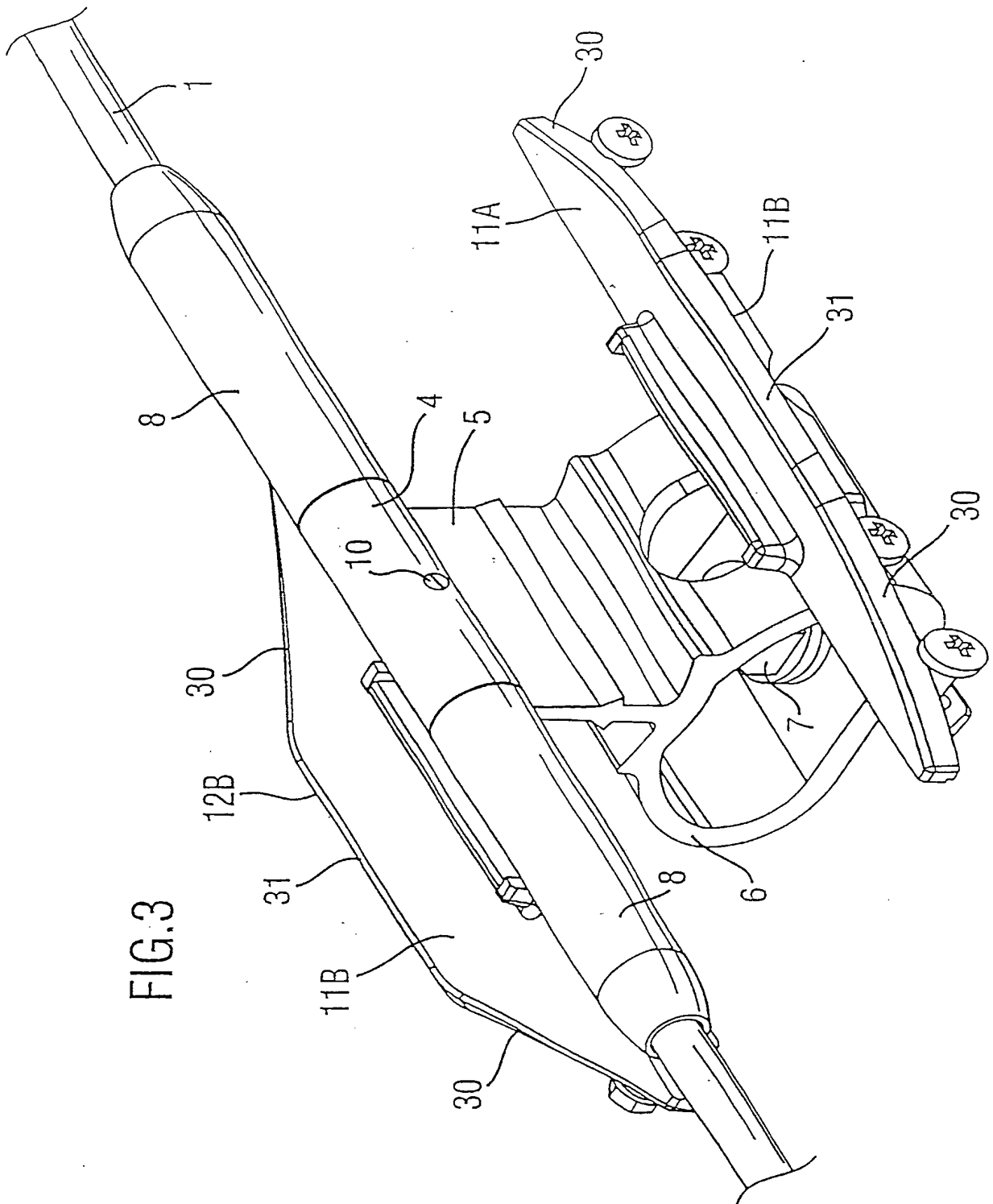
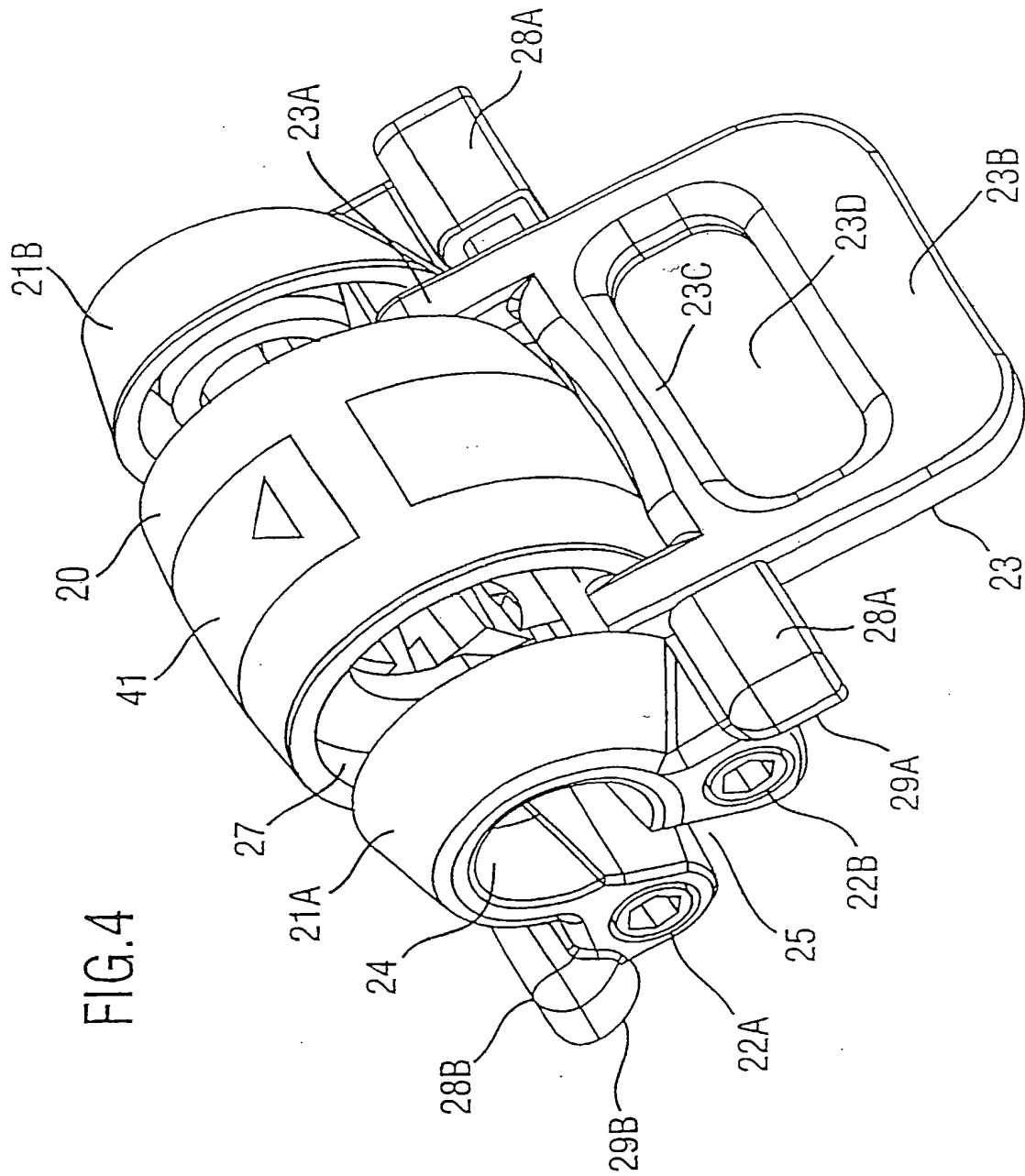
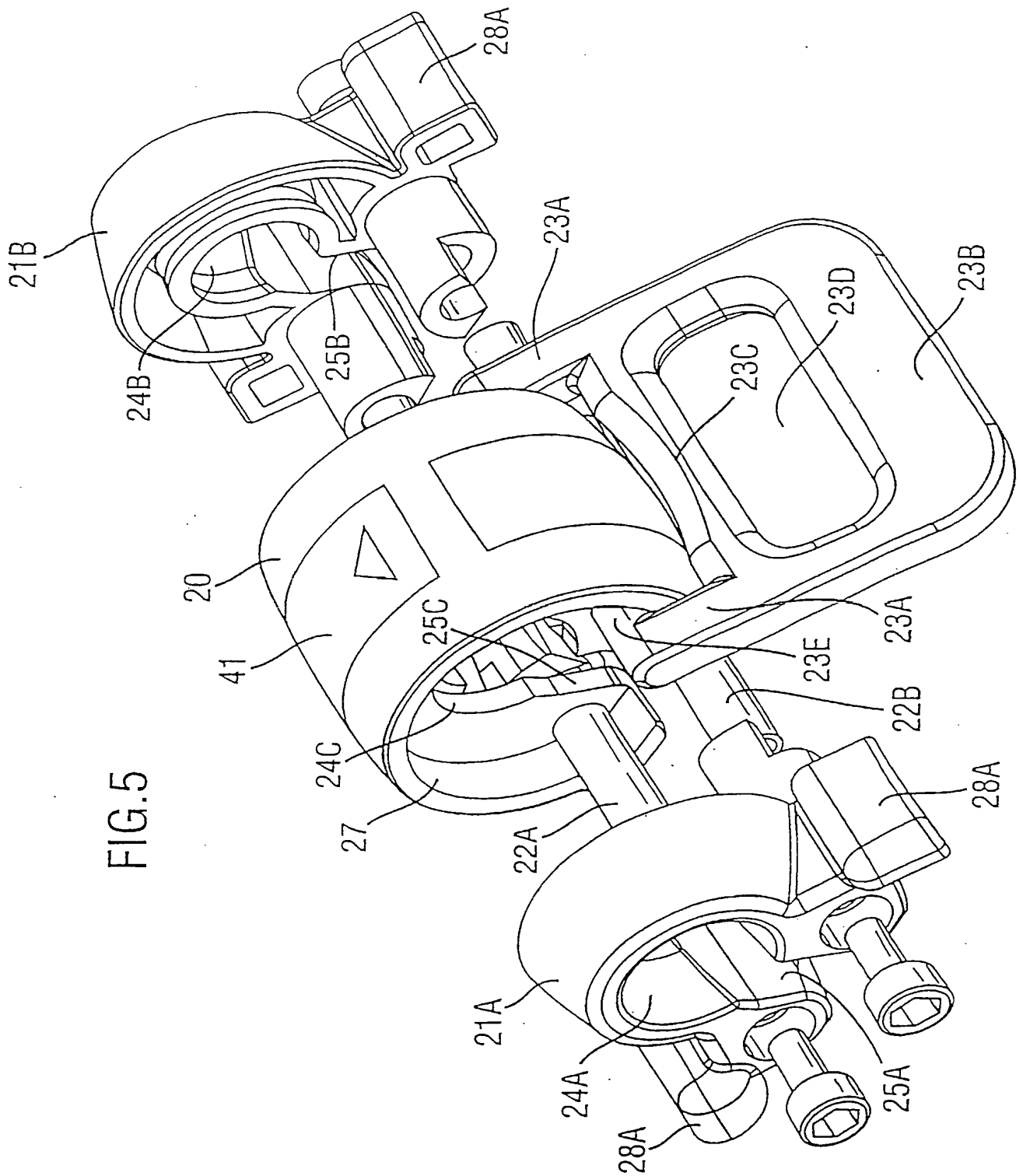


FIG. 3





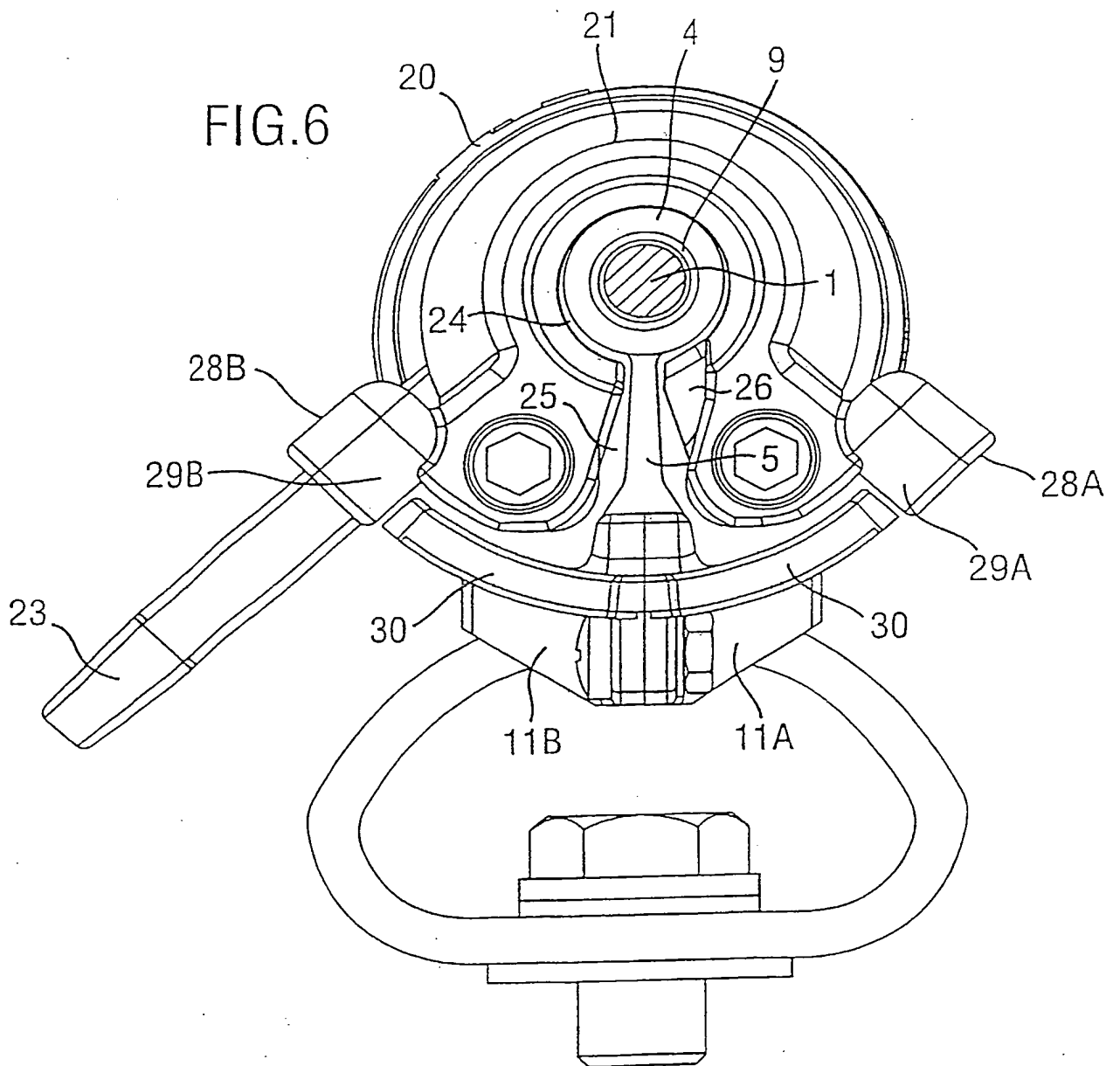


FIG.7

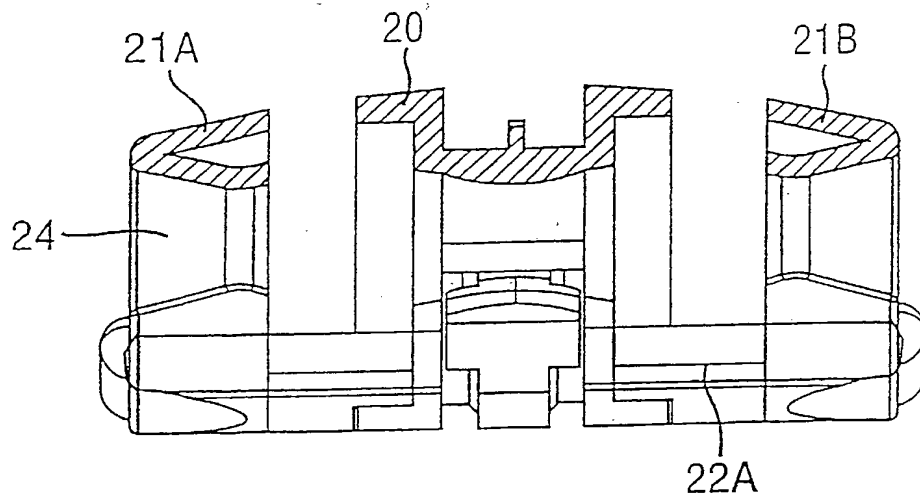


FIG.8

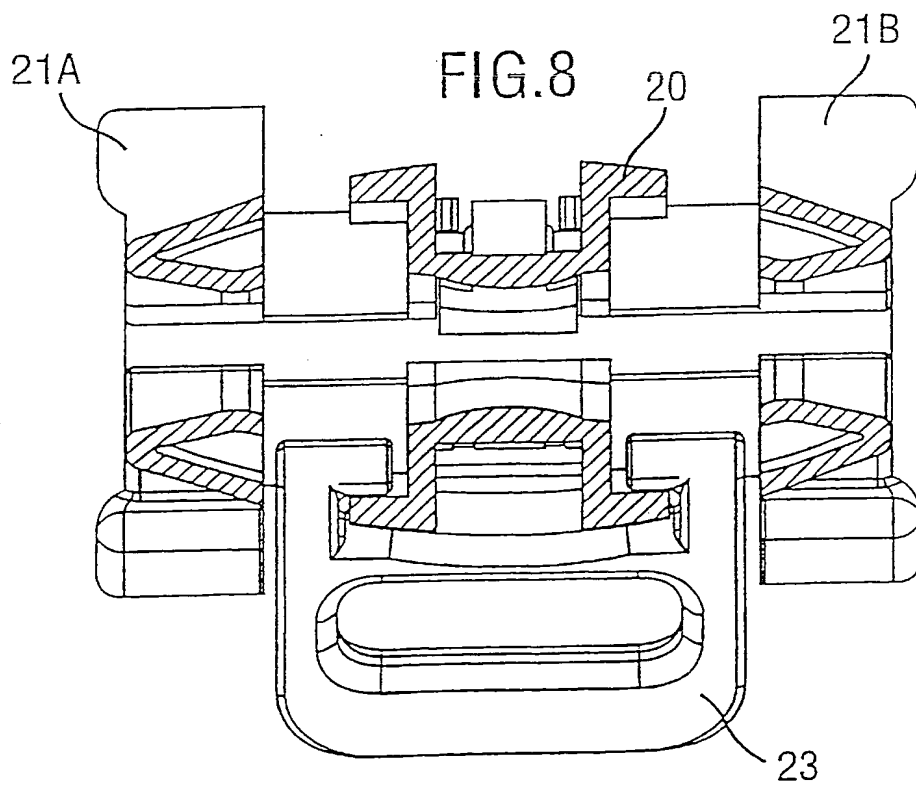


FIG.9

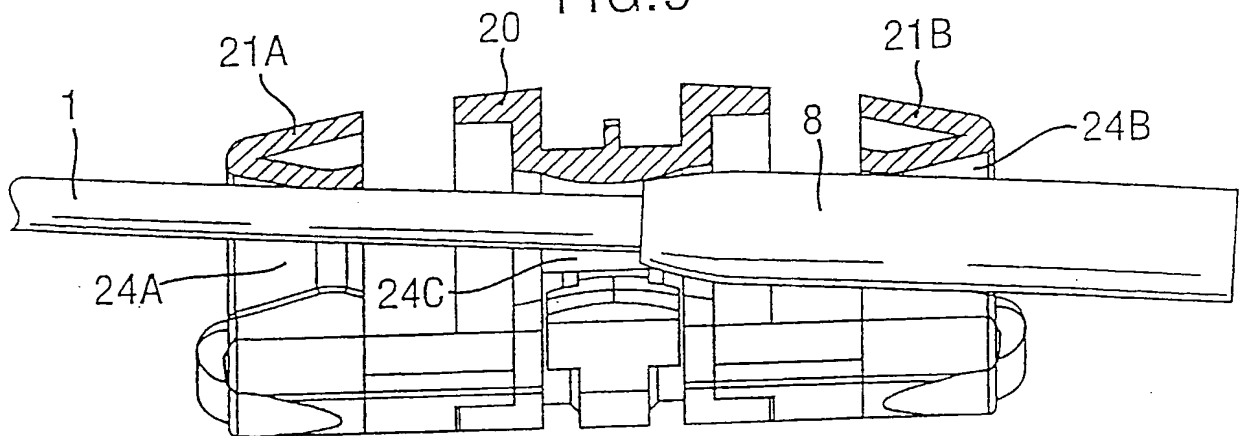
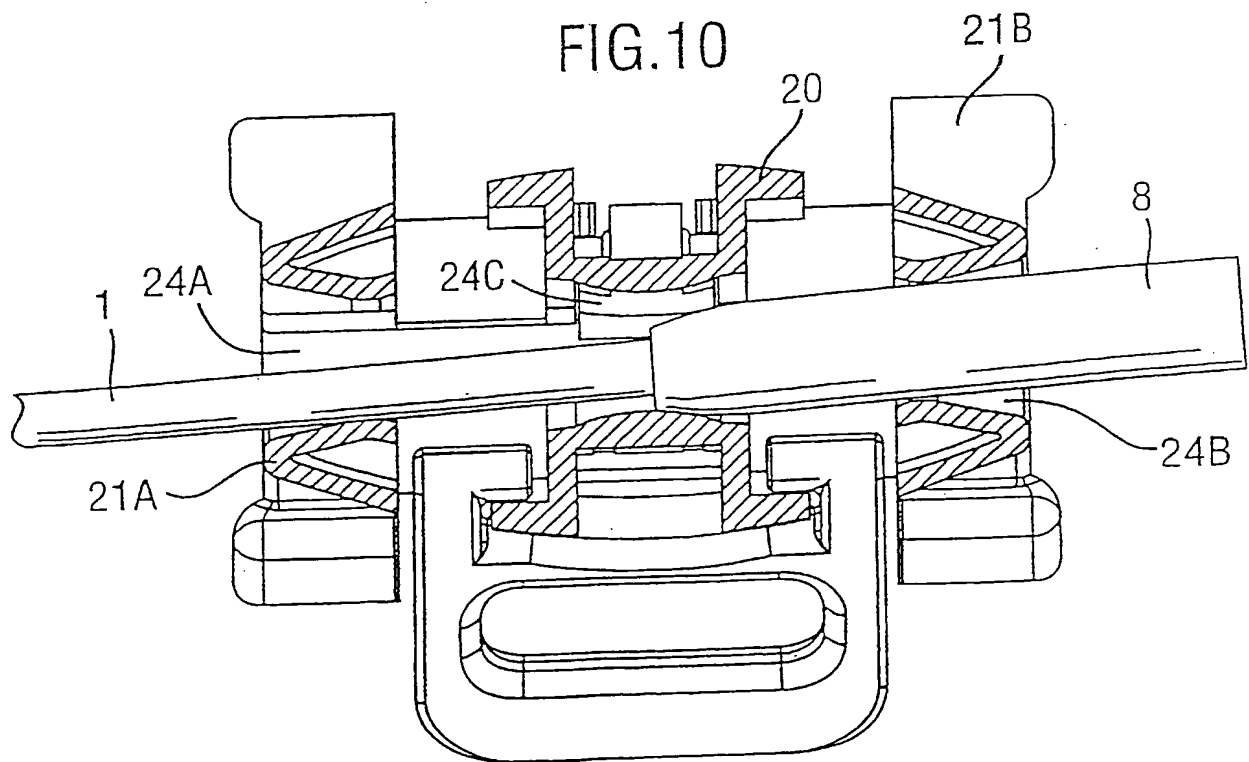
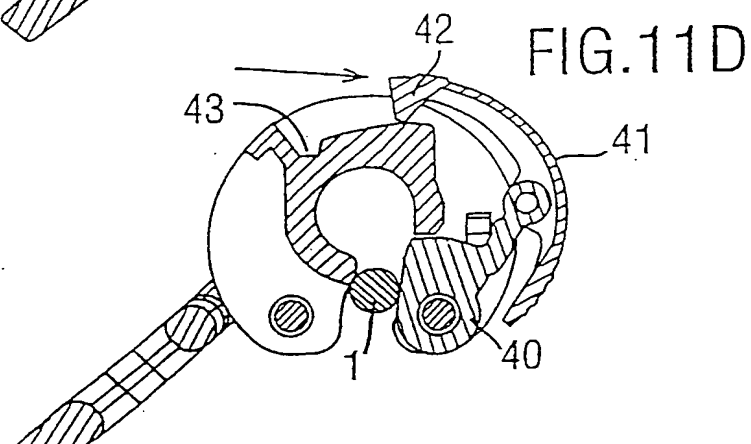
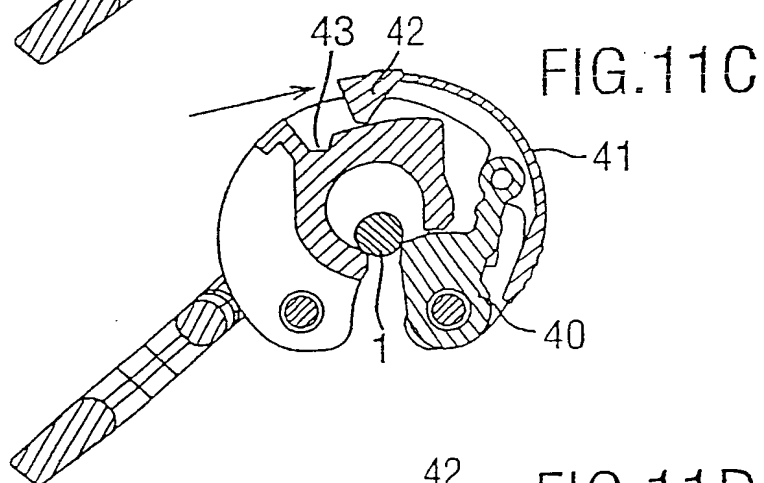
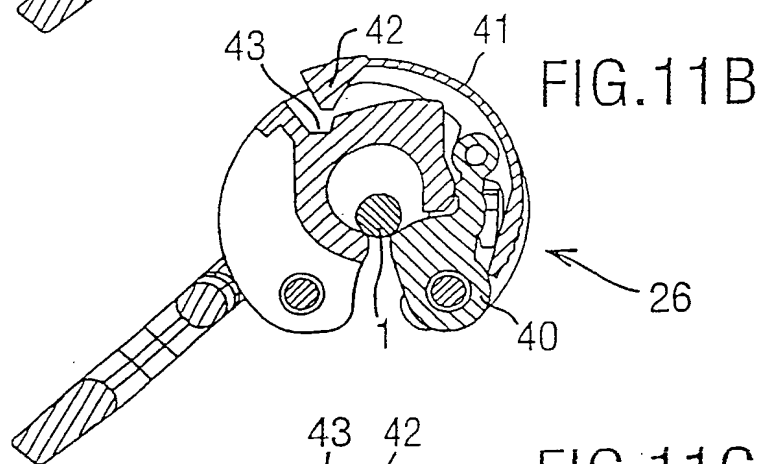
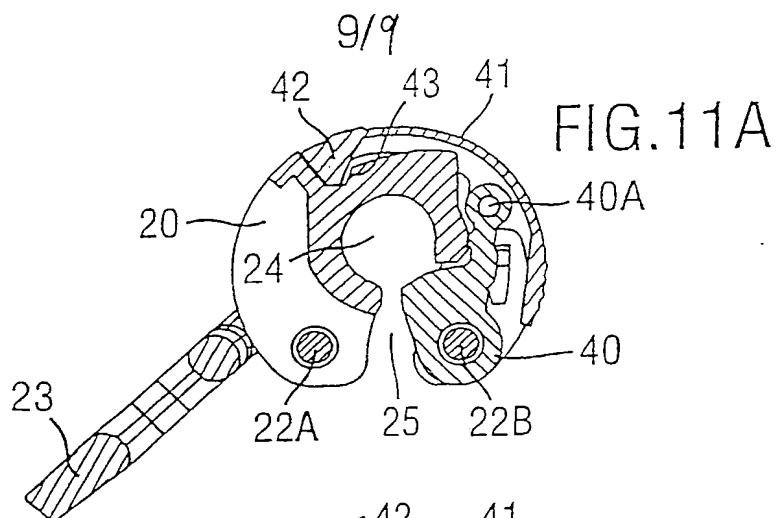


FIG.10





Safety Line Traveller and Support

This invention relates to a traveller and support for a safety line. The traveller can be used to secure fall safety equipment to a safety line which is supported by the supports and the traveller and supports cooperate to allow the traveller to move along the safety line and traverse the supports without the traveller being detached from the safety line.

In order to protect personnel from falls when working at height it is usual, and often a legal requirement, to provide an elongate safety line or track running across or along the area in which the personnel are to work and to attach the personnel to the elongate safety line using a traveller able to slide along the line and connected to a safety harness worn by the personnel through a flexible lanyard.

The flexible lanyard allows the user freedom of movement to either side of the safety line and the traveller is pulled along the safety line by the lanyard to follow the user as they move along the safety line.

The safety line is anchored at each end. Further, in order to allow a long uninterrupted safety line and to allow the safety line to be guided around corners it is usually necessary for the safety line to also be mounted on a number of intermediate supports disposed along its length. Accordingly, the traveller and supports are arranged to cooperate so that the traveller can automatically pass along the safety line over the intermediate supports when pulled by the user with the lanyard without it being necessary to detach the traveller from the safety line.

A number of systems have been proposed in which this is carried out by the intermediate support including an arm section narrower than the safety line and the traveller being formed in a substantially C-shape broken by a slot, the slot being narrower than the

safety line but wider than the arm of the intermediate support so that arm can pass through the slot to allow the traveller to traverse the intermediate support when pulled along the safety line but not allowing the traveller to become detached from the safety line.

A problem which has been encountered in systems of this type is ensuring that the slot in the traveller is properly aligned with the arm of the intermediate support in order to allow passage of the traveller over the intermediate support.

It has been proposed to overcome this problem in the past by using two parallel safety lines or a track having a non-circular cross-section so that a traveller engaged with both parallel safety lines or with the track respectively has its orientation controlled so that the slot and support are in alignment. However, such an approach cannot be used in a traveller for use with a single safety line because a safety line has a substantially circular cross-section and so cannot be used to control the orientation of a traveller sliding along it.

It has also been proposed to control the alignment of a traveller on a single safety line so that the slot aligns with the safety line arm by using the load applied to the traveller by the safety lanyard to control the orientation of the traveller.

The problem with systems of this type is that in order for the traveller to be correctly rotationally aligned on the safety line so that the slot is aligned with the intermediate support arm the load applied by the safety lanyard to the traveller must be maintained within a small specified range of directions.

For example, where the safety line passes over the area in which users are to work above their head height the traveller and intermediate supports can be arranged so that the slot in the traveller is aligned with the intermediate support arm when the load applied to the traveller through the safety lanyard is vertically below, or in a small arc centered on the

vertical below, the safety line. However, such a system suffers from the problem that it will not work if the user moves out of a narrow strip centred below the safety line because this will result in off vertical loads being applied through the lanyard as the user moves further away from the safety line. This will cause the traveller to rotate until the traveller slot and intermediate support arm no longer align. Accordingly, systems of this type are only suitable for use in situations where personnel movement is constrained to a narrow strip below the safety line, such as movement along catwalks, but are not suitable for situations where personnel can move freely about a large area.

Similar arrangements have also been proposed for use on roofs where the safety line is mounted a short distance above the roof surface on which the personnel can walk. Again, the usefulness of systems of this type is limited by the problem that the orientation of the load applied through the safety lanyard must be within a narrow range to maintain the alignment of the traveller slot with the intermediate safety arm. As a result, such systems are "handed" in that the user must always remain on the same side of the safety line and the distance which the user can move from the safety line is relatively small because if the user moves too far from the safety line the orientation of the force applied to the traveller by the safety lanyard cannot be reliably kept within an acceptable range for orientation of the arm and slot.

The present invention is intended to overcome these problems at least in part.

In a first aspect this invention provides a traveller for a fall arrest system comprising:

a body having a bore and a slot narrower than the bore linking the bore to the exterior of the body, and

a load member connected to the body for pivotal movement relative to the body and suitable for attachment to fall safety equipment,

the body having a centre of gravity positioned so that when the traveller is supported on a safety line passing through the bore the body will be urged by gravity to rotate about the safety line towards a position in which the slot has a predetermined orientation relative to the safety line.

In a second aspect this invention provides a support for a safety line for a fall arrest system comprising a support section having a tube suitable for retaining a safety line and attachment means for attaching the support to a structure, the supporting section and attachment means being connected by an arm narrower than the tube, and further comprising a guide surface spaced apart from the arm and arranged so that when a safety line is retained in the tube and a traveller moves along the safety line towards the support the guide surface can cooperate with a guide member on a traveller to rotate the traveller about the safety line into a predetermined orientation relative to the arm.

In a third aspect this invention provides a fall arrest system comprising a safety line, at least one support and at least one traveller in which the support comprises a support section which retains the safety line and attachment means for attaching the support to a structure, the support section and attachment means being connected by an arm narrower than the safety line, the traveller comprises a body having a bore larger than the support section through which the safety line passes and a slot narrower than the safety line but wider than the arm and linking the bore to the exterior of the body, and a load member connected to the body for pivotal movement relative to the body and suitable for attachment to fall safety equipment,

the body having a centre of gravity positioned so that when the body is mounted on the safety line the body is urged by gravity to rotate about the safety line towards a position in which the slot is in line with the arm.

The traveller according to the invention, support according to the invention and fall arrest system according to the invention comprising the traveller and support allows the traveller to be automatically oriented with a support so that an arm of the support can pass through a slot in the traveller allowing the traveller to traverse the intermediate support when pulled along a safety line by a user lanyard but not allowing the traveller to become detached from the safety line regardless of the orientation of the force applied to the traveller by the lanyard.

As a result the system is not "handed", a user can move from one side of the safety line to the other without any problems and the user can move any desired distance from the safety line. Further, the lanyard connecting the user to the traveller can be as long as is desired without effecting the passage of the traveller over the support.

An example of a traveller and safety line support according to the invention is shown in the accompanying figures.

Figure 1 shows a perspective view of a traveller according to the invention and a support according to the invention;

Figure 2 shows an enlarged view of the support arm of Figure 1;

Figure 3 shows a partially exploded view of the support of Figure 1;

Figure 4 shows an enlarged view of the traveller of Figure 1;

Figure 5 shows a partially exploded view of the traveller of Figure 1;

Figure 6 shows an end view of the traveller of Figure 1 passing over the support of

Figure 1;

Figure 7 shows a cut-away view of the traveller of Figure 1 cut-away axially in a vertical plane;

Figure 8 shows a cut-away view of the traveller of Figure 1 cut-away in the horizontal plane;

Figure 9 shows the same view as Figure 7 with the traveller partially mounted on the support;

Figure 10 shows the same view as Figure 8 with the traveller partially mounted on the support;

Figures 11a to 11d show the operation of a catch incorporated in the traveller of Figure 1.

A continuous safety line 1 is supported by and passes through an intermediate support 2. A traveller 3 is mounted for sliding movement along the safety line 1.

The support 2 comprises a cable support section 4 formed as a hollow cylindrical tube through which the safety line 1 passes and an arm 5 connected to the support section 4 and having a width smaller than the diameter of the safety line 1. The arm 5 is connected to a spacer section 6 incorporating means for securing the support 2 to some fixed structure. Conveniently, the securing means is a bolt hole for receiving a conventional bolt 7.

Conveniently, the spacer section 6 can be formed with a hollow closed cross-section so that the support section 4, arm 5 and spacer section 6 can be formed as a single extrusion. However, this is not essential and the shape and profile of the spacer section 6 can be varied as required to provide suitable spacing of the safety line 1 from the support structure and allow loads in a fall arrest situation to be safely transmitted between the safety line and support structure.

The support 2 also includes two elongate guide elements 8 formed by hollow tubes extending along the safety line 1 in each direction from the tubular support section 4. The

elongate elements 8 have the same outer diameter as the tubular support section 4 and their ends remote from the tubular support section 4 are tapered inwardly towards the safety line.

The elongate guide elements 8 are secured to respective ends of the tubular support section 4 so that they are retained adjacent to the tubular section 4 and cannot move along the safety line 1 away from the tubular section 4 and preferably the elongate elements 8 are attached to the support section 4 so as to allow some pivotal movement so that the elongate elements 8 can pivot relative to the support section 4. This prevents the elongate elements 8 being subject to large bending loads when the safety line 1 is displaced away from the axis of the tubular support section 4. Such displacement will occur in a fall arrest situation. However, such sideways movement or loading of the safety line can also occur due to personnel leaning against or resting on the safety line 1 or using it as a handhold or due to wind loading or wind generated oscillation of the safety line 1.

Preferably, the safety line 1 is a stainless steel cable as is conventionally used in fall arrest systems while the support section 4, arm 5 and spacer section 6 of the support 2 are formed from an aluminium alloy extrusion. Accordingly, in order to prevent corrosion problems due to contact between dissimilar metals an insulating plastics sleeve 9 is provided inside the tubular support section 4 to electrically insulate the tubular support section 4 from the safety line 1.

The internal diameters of the extension elements 8 and the insulating sleeve 9 are all the same.

A screw 10 secures the insulating sleeve 9 within the support section 4. The screw 10 does not contact the safety line 1, which passes through the support 2 as a continuous unbroken length and is free to slide through the support 2.

The support 2 also comprises a pair of guide elements 11a and 11b which extend symmetrically from each side of the support 2. The outwardly projecting edges of the guide elements 11a and 11b form respective outwardly projecting guide surfaces 12a and 12b. The function of the guide surfaces 12a and 12b is discussed in detail below.

Preferably, the guide elements 11a and 11b are formed of plastics material and are secured together, for example by bolts, to locate the base of the arm 5 between them. Preferably the opposed surfaces of the arm 5, spacer section 6 and guide elements 11a and 11b have cooperating surface profiles to securely locate them relative to one another.

The traveller 3 comprises a body formed by a tubular centre 20 and two tubular ends 21a and 21b located at each end of and coaxial with the centre 20. The ends 21a and 21b are mirror images of one another so that the traveller 3 can travel along the safety line 1 and past the supports 2 in either direction. The centre 20 and ends 21a and 21b are secured together to form a single rigid structure by a pair of longitudinal parallel bars 22a and 22b passing through respective bores in the centre 20 and ends 21a and 21b.

A substantially D-shaped load handle 23 is attached to the centre 20. The load handle 23 is formed by a pair of parallel arms 23a linked by a pair of parallel connecting arms 23b and 23c to define a central aperture 23d. Lanyards or other connectors to personnel fall safety equipment are connected to the traveller 3 through the load handle 23. It is preferred that such attachment be through a carabineer or similar looped connector passing around an outer connecting arm 23b of the load handle 23 and through the aperture 23a of the load handle 23 for reasons which will be explained in detail below. However, the load handle 23 can be profiled, shaped or provided with attachment elements as required to be secured to whatever connectors are to be used.

The traveller 3 has a longitudinal circular bore 24 passing through it. The bore 24 has an outward flared section at each end. The bore 24 is made up of respective coaxial bores 24a, 24b and 24c in the ends 21a and 21b and centre 20 respectively and has a minimum internal diameter slightly greater than the external diameter of the support section 4 and elongate elements 8 of the support 2. The traveller 3 extends substantially around the bore 24 but is broken by a slot 25 extending longitudinally along the traveller 3 so that the traveller 3 is substantially C-shaped. The slot 25 has an outward flare at each end. Further, the slot 25 is slightly wider than the arm 5 of the support and is normally closed by a catch mechanism 26 so that the slot 25 is narrower than the diameter of the safety line 1. As a result, when the catch mechanism 26 is in the closed position the traveller 3 cannot be released from the safety line 1.

The catch mechanism 26 can be selectively moved into an open position in which the slot 25 is wider than the diameter of the safety line 1 to allow the traveller to be mounted onto or removed from the safety line 1. It should be noted that even when the catch 26 is in the open position the slot 25 is not wide enough to allow a traveller to be detached from the support 2 because this would require larger slot 25 and in general the narrower the slot 25 the stronger the traveller 3 will be.

The provision of a selectively openable catch mechanism 26 is not essential. However, if this is not provided it will not be possible to place the traveller 3 on and off the safety line 1 except at breaks in the safety line 1 where the traveller can be slid on and off the end of the safety line 1. Such an arrangement would in theory allow the traveller 3 to be made simpler and more secure because the slot 25 could be made with a single fixed width narrower than the diameter of the safety line 1. A traveller of this type could be used with suitable

attachment and detachment stations being located at the ends of or at intermediate points along safety lines. Such attachment or detachment stations, sometimes known as gates, are well known in the art and need not be discussed in detail here. However, it is expected that in practice the greater convenience of a traveller 3 able to be attached and detached to the safety line 1 at any point along its length will outweigh the advantages of a simpler and stronger traveller only able to be attached and detached at dedicated stations. This is because in practice the requirement to go to a station to attach and detach the traveller from the safety line 1 will cause many users to risk their lives by not attaching themselves to the safety line 1 in order to avoid the inconvenience of having to find a station.

In the described embodiments having a three part structure of a centre 20 and ends 21a and 21b the slot 25 is formed by three slots 25a, 25b and 25c in line formed in the ends 21a, 21b and centre 20 respectively. The respectively openable catch 26 is provided to open and close the slot 25c in the centre 20 only and the slots 25a and 25c in the ends 21a and 21b have a profile corresponding to the shape of the slots 25c when the catch 26 is in the open position.

The centre 20 and ends 21a and 21b of the traveller 3 are substantially symmetrical about a vertical plane running through the centre of the slot 25 and through the axis of the bore 24. The bore 24 is located within the traveller 3 so that the centre of gravity of the body made up of the centre 20 and ends 21a and 21b is located such that when the traveller 3 is located on and supported by the safety line 1 the traveller 3 will rotate about the safety line and orient itself so that the slot 25 is vertically below the safety line 1.

In the illustrated embodiment the centre 20 and ends 21a and 21b have an external profile which is substantially circular about an axis which is offset from the axis of the bore

24 towards the slot 25 in order to ensure that the centre of gravity of the body comprising the centre 20 and ends 21a and 21b is well below the point of contact between the traveller 3 and safety line 1 so that there is a strong rotational moment acting on the traveller 3 which will rotate it about the safety line 1 into a position where the slot 25 is located vertically below the safety line 1.

The load handle 23 is attached to the centre 20 of the traveller 3 for pivotal movement around the traveller 3 through a large arc. The pair of parallel spaced apart arms 23a have extensions which pass around opposite ends of the centre 20 and have respective inwardly projecting pins 23e. The centre 20 has adjacent each of its ends an inwardly facing circular bearing surface 27 coaxial with the bore 24. The pins 23e projecting inside the centre 20 and bearing against the bearing surfaces 27 prevent the load handle 23 becoming detached from the rest of the traveller 3 but allow the load handle 23 to rotate relative to the rest of the traveller 3 through a large arc, in the described embodiment approximately 270° ranging from 45° below the horizontal and through the upward vertical to 45° below the opposite horizontal when the traveller 3 is hanging freely on the safety line 1 so that the slot 25 is vertically below the safety line 1.

The use of a D-shaped load handle 23 having two connecting arms 23b and 23c is preferred over a simple C-shaped handle because this arrangement reduces the risk of the parallel arms 23a splaying apart under load and releasing the pins 23e from the centre 20.

This arrangement allows the body of the traveller 3, that is the parts of the traveller 3 other than the load handle 23, to rotate under the influence of their own weight around the safety line 1 into a position where the slot 25 is substantially vertically below the safety line 1

independently of the direction of load applied through the load handle 23 in the attached safety lanyard throughout the large arc of movement of the load handle 23.

This is possible because the load handle 23 is able to rotate about the body of the traveller 3 independently of the rotation of the body of the traveller 3 about the safety line 1.

Each of the ends 24a and 24b of the traveller 3 has a pair of spaced apart projecting cam elements 28a,28b. The cam elements 28a and 28b project radially outwardly from the respective ends 21a,21b and also project longitudinally beyond the end faces of the ends 21a and 21b. The cam elements 28a and 28b are located on each side of and equally spaced from the slot 25 and are 90° apart. Each cam element 28a,28b defines a respective curved cam surface 29a,29b extending substantially radially from the centre of the traveller 3 and facing around the circumference of the traveller 3 towards the slot 25 and longitudinally outwards from the end face of the respective end 21a,21b of the traveller 3.

In use the traveller 3 is mounted on and supported by the safety line 1 which passes through the longitudinal bore 24. As explained above the offset of the centre of gravity of the main section of the traveller 3 from the point of contact between the safety line 1 and the inner surface of the bore 24 will cause the weight of the main section of the traveller 3 to generate a rotational couple which will tend to rotate the main section of the traveller 3 about the safety line 1 into an orientation where the slot 25 lies substantially vertically below the safety line 1.

As a user connected to the traveller 3 through a safety lanyard attached to the load handle 23 moves along the safety line 1 the traveller 3 is dragged by the lanyard along the safety line 1 to follow the user.

As explained above, during this movement the traveller 3 will automatically keep itself oriented so that the slot 25 is vertically below the safety line 1. When the traveller 3

reaches an intermediate support 2 one or both of the cam surfaces 29a,29b of the cams 28a,28b on the end 21a,21b of the traveller 3 which is moving towards the support 2 will come into contact with a respective one or both of the guide surfaces 12a and 12b defined by the edges of the guide elements 11a and 11b of the support 2.

If the traveller 3 were perfectly oriented about the safety line 1 so that the slot 25 was exactly vertically below the safety line 1 the slot 25 would be in line with the arm 5 of the support 2 and the cam surfaces 29a,29b would contact the respective guide surfaces 12a and 12b simultaneously.

In practice there will almost always be at least some rotational misalignment of the traveller 3 despite the tendency of the traveller 3 to orient itself with the slot 25 vertically below the safety line 1 so that one of the cam surfaces 29a,29b will contact the respective guide surface 12a or 12b first. Once one of the cam surfaces 29a,29b is in contact with one of the guide surfaces 12a,12b, the movement of the cam surface 29a or 29b along the guide surface 12a or 12b as the traveller 3 moves further towards the support 2 rotates the body of the traveller 3 so that the slot 25 is moved into alignment with the arm 5. When the body of the traveller 3 is correctly oriented with the slot 25 in line with the arm 5 the second one of the cam surfaces 29a,29b will also come into contact with its respective guide surface 12a,12b, stopping rotation of the body.

The traveller 3 can then pass over the support 2 guided by the cam surfaces 29a,29b in contact with the respective guide surfaces 12a and 12b so that the support section 4 and elongate element 8 pass through the bore 24 and the arm 5 passes through the slot 25.

In order to provide this guiding function effectively each guide surface 12a,12b defined by the edges of the guide elements 11a,11b comprises a leading section 30 at each end

at an angle to the safety line 1 to engage a cam surface 29a,29b and rotate the traveller 3 and a central straight section 31 running parallel to the safety line 1 which guides the cam surface 29a,29b as the traveller 3 passes over the support 2 to keep the traveller correctly aligned.

It would be expected that the point at which both of the cam surfaces 29a and 29b contacted the respective guide surfaces 12a and 12b and the body of the traveller 3 was correctly aligned with the support 2 would be at the junction point between the leading section 30 and central section 31 of the respective guide surfaces 12a,12b. However, in the described embodiment the central sections 31 are positioned such that the point at which both cam surfaces 29a,29b contact the respective guide surfaces 12a,12b is at points on the leading sections 30 of the guide surfaces 12a,12b slightly before they merge into the central sections 31. As a result, after the traveller 3 is correctly aligned and both cam surfaces 29a,29b are in contact with the respective guide surfaces 12a,12b the further small outward extension of the leading surfaces 30 causes the traveller 3 to be lifted upwards off the safety line 1 until the bore 24 is coaxial with the safety line 1 and support section 4 and guide elements 8 of the support 2. This reduces the risk of the traveller 3 becoming jammed or locked in position as the end of the guide element 8 enters the aperture 24.

This further function of the cam surfaces 29a,29b and guide surfaces 12a,12b is optional and it may be preferred to have the lifting upwards of the traveller 3 from its normal position where the top of the bore 24 is resting on the safety line 1 to the bore 24 being substantially coaxial with the safety line 1 carried out by contact between the tapered or flared leading sections of the elongate elements 8 or bore 24. However, even where most of the lifting of the traveller 3 is carried out by these alternate means it is preferred to have the traveller 3 lifted by the cam surfaces 29a,29b and guide surfaces 12a,12b at least initially in

order to prevent contact between the traveller 3 and the end of the elongate element 8 in order to avoid any risk of the traveller 3 jamming on contact with the end of the elongate element 8.

As explained above the cams 28a, 28b are spaced apart by 90° so that they are spaced 45° either side of the slot 25 around the circumference of the traveller 3. Accordingly, provided that the orientation of the body of the traveller 3 is within 90° of the desired orientation where the slot 25 is vertically below the safety line 1 one of the cam surfaces 29a, 29b will contact one of the guide surfaces 12a, 12b and the traveller 3 will be able to successfully pass over the support 2. The arrangement of the centre of gravity of the body of the traveller 3 to cause the body of the traveller 3 to orient itself under the influence of gravity will reliably ensure that the orientation of the body of the traveller 3 is within this range.

The internal diameter of the bore 24 is larger than the external diameter of the safety line 1 so that the traveller 3 may approach the support 2 with the axis of the bore 24 at an angle to the safety line 1, as shown in Figures 9 and 10. This is likely to arise because the force applied by the safety lanyard to move the traveller 3 along the safety line 1 is applied through the load handle 23 so that the applied force is offset from the safety line 1 and the resulting couple will tend to rotate the traveller 3 about an axis perpendicular to the safety line 1. The amount of this misalignment is limited by the contact of the safety line 1 with the inner surface of the bore 24. Accordingly, this misalignment can be kept to a value which can be compensated for by the tapered ends of the elongate elements 8 and the entry flare on the ends of the bore 24. However, in order to avoid the possibility of the traveller 3 jamming due to this misalignment the internal surfaces of each of the coaxial bores 24a, 24b and 24c are each arranged to have a curved profile which is slightly tapered from a maximum diameter in each end to a minimum diameter in the centre.

The use of such a varying diameter internal profile helps to generate a couple on the traveller 3 when the support 2 enters the bore 24, this couple acting to bring the traveller into proper alignment.

The mounting of the carabineer or similar attachments to the safety lanyard so that it is free to slide along the D-shaped load handle 23 also helps to avoid jamming due to misalignment. This is because the attachment naturally tends to slide towards the front of the D-handle so that the point at which the load is applied is nearer to the front of the traveller 3 than the rear regardless of the direction which the traveller 3 is moving. Having the pulling point nearer to the front of the traveller 3 helps to reduce the risk of jamming due to misalignment.

As explained above the circular bearing surfaces 27 in contact with the pins 23e of the load handle 23 are coaxial with the bore 24. As a result, when the traveller 3 is suspended on the safety line 1 the circular bearing surfaces 27 will not be coaxial with the safety line 1. In a fall arrest situation a large fall arrest load component perpendicular to the safety line 1 is applied through the load handle 23 and the offset between the axis of the circular bearing surfaces 27 and the safety line 1 will cause the body part of the traveller 3 to rotate relative to the handle 23 about the safety line 1 until the load handle 23 is at the end of its available arc of movement relative to the body of the traveller 3. As a result, in a fall arrest situation the body of the traveller 3 will always rotate so that the safety line 1 is in contact with the side of the bore 24 at a position remote from the slot 25. This provides an additional margin of safety in operation because the weakest point of the traveller 3 is the slot 25. That is to say, the load which can be transmitted between the load handle 23 and safety line 1 will be a minimum when the geometry of the system is such that the load on the safety line 1 is directly in line

with the slots 25 and this worst case geometry will not occur. In the preferred embodiment the cam elements 28a,28b are arranged so that when the load handle 23 is at the limit of its pivotal movement around the body of the traveller 3 the load handle 23 is further from the slot 25 than the cam surfaces 29a,29b. This ensures that when the traveller 3 is passing over the support 2 it is not possible for the load handle 23 to contact the support 2 and jam the traveller 3. This arrangement is best shown in Figure 6.

The catch mechanism 26 is shown in Figures 11a to 11d which show cross-sections through the catch mechanism 26 in the centre 20 of the traveller 3.

The catch 26 is normally in the closed and locked position shown in Figure 11a.

The catch 26 comprises a first catch member 40 able to pivot between a first closed position shown in Figure 11a and a second open position shown in Figure 11d about one of the parallel bars 22b. The catch element 40 is biased into the closed position by a spring, not shown in the figures for clarity.

The catch element 40 is shaped so that the surface of the catch element 40 facing into the bore 24 is located between the bore 24 and the bar 22b about which the catch element 40 rotates. As a result, if it is attempted to force the safety line 1 out of the bore 24 through the slot 25 the forces applied to the catch element 40 will urge it closed rather than urge it open.

The catch element 40 is also pivotally connected to a handle element 41 forming a part of the outer surface of the traveller 3 and having an inwardly projecting tooth 42 engaged in a recess 43 in the centre 20 to lock the catch, as shown in Figure 11a. The handle element 41 is biased by a spring to keep the tooth 42 in the recess 43, again the spring is not shown for clarity.

In order to open the catch mechanism 26 to allow the traveller 3 to be placed on or removed from the safety line 1 an end 43 of the handle element 41 must be pushed inwards against the spring biasing to rotate the handle element 41 relative to the catch element 40 and disengage the tooth 42 from the recess 43 and unlock the catch as shown in Figure 11b. Then, the handle element 41 must be moved, in the opposite direction to rotate the handle element 41 and catch element 40 around the bar 22b, again against spring biasing, and open the slot 25 as shown in Figure 11c. Eventually this movement puts the catch element 40 into the second open position shown in Figure 11d where the slot 25 is wide enough for the safety line 1 to pass through it. If at any point the handle element 41 is released the biasing will move the catch element 40 and handle element 41 back to the fully closed and locked position shown in Figure 11a.

The requirement for two separate and sustained actions to be taken in order to open the catch mechanism 26 prevents accidental or inadvertent release of the traveller 3 from the safety line 1.

As has been explained above, the catch mechanism 26 is situated only in the centre 20 of the traveller 3 and the slots in the ends 21a and 21b will have the same profile as the open catch mechanism 26 shown in Figure 11b.

In the described embodiment, in a fall arrest situation all of the loads are carried between the load handle 23 and safety line 1 through the centre 20 of the traveller 3 and not through the ends 21a and 21b. Further, it will be understood that most of the wear on the traveller 3 in use will take place on the ends 21a, 21b. As a result, the operating costs of the system can be minimised by making the ends 21a, 21b which do not have to carry fall arrest loads relatively cheaply and replacing them when worn out.

One alternative embodiment of the invention would be to replace the cams 28 with wheels mounted for rotation about respective axes extending approximately radially from the axis of the bore 24. The circumferential surfaces of these wheels would replace the cam surfaces 29a and guide the traveller 3 by rolling along the guide surfaces 12a and 12b as tracks. This arrangement using guide wheels would minimise the frictional resistance of the traveller 3 to passing over the support 2 and can be most advantageously applied in a system where the guide wheels and guide surfaces 12a and 12b cooperate to lift the traveller 3 so that the only contact between the traveller 3 and support 2 is through the guide wheels.

It will be realised that the precise shape and location of the cams 28, guide wheels and guide surfaces 12 may be varied. For example, it is not essential that the cams 28 project beyond from the front faces of the ends 21a and 21b of the traveller 3. However, the cam surfaces 29 or wheels must contact the guide surfaces 12 and bring the traveller 3 into alignment with the support 2 before the arm 5 contacts the traveller 3.

The use of separate elongate elements 8 as part of the support 2 is not essential and this could be replaced by giving the support section 4 tapered ends. Whether or not the elongate elements 8 are required will depend upon the materials used for the arm 2 and the difference in external diameter between the safety line 1 and support section 4.

In one example of the invention the safety line 1 is a stainless steel cable having an external diameter of 8mm and the external diameter of the tubular section 4 is 16mm.

The traveller 3 according to the invention is self orienting about the safety line 1 to bring it roughly into the required orientation to traverse the support 2 and the cams or wheels on the traveller 3 cooperate with the guide surfaces 12 on the support 2 to adjust the orientation of the traveller 3 to be precisely aligned to allow the support to be traversed.

This system provides the advantage that where the safety line 1 is mounted on the supports 2 on a surface on which personnel work the system is not "handed" so that a user can move on either side of the safety line 1 and cross over from one side of the safety line 1 to the other freely. Further, because the orientation of the traveller 3 is not controlled by the forces applied along the safety lanyard the safety lanyard can be as long as desired because there is no need to control the orientation of the forces applied to the traveller 3 by the safety lanyard. As a result, users can move wherever they wish through a very large area around the safety line 1 without effecting the smooth and automatic movement of the traveller 3 along the safety line 1 and over the supports 2 as dragged by the lanyard to follow the users movements.

It will be appreciated that such automatic smooth and reliable traversing of supports by the traveller even the end of a long lanyard is very important in practice because the reaction of many users to a traveller which regularly hung up or jammed on supports and required the user to take some action to un-jam the traveller and move it over the supports will be to simply disconnect themselves from the traveller and work without any fall protection.

The invention is discussed in terms of its use in a personnel fall safety system in which a user is attached to the traveller by a safety lanyard. This is the most important application in the invention but it will be understood that other items could be attached to the traveller on a lanyard such as items of equipment.

In the described embodiment of the invention the safety line 1 passes through the supports 2 but it is not attached to them so that the safety line 1 can be freely pulled through the supports 2. This arrangement is common in fall arrest systems in order to allow fall energy to be transmitted along the safety line 1 from the traveller 3 through one or more intermediate supports to an end anchor and energy absorber at the end of the safety line 1

which absorbs the fall energy. However, alternative systems in which the safety line is rigidly attached to the supports and the fall energy is absorbed by energy absorbers incorporated into the intermediate supports or in which controlled movement of the safety line through the intermediate supports is allowed so that some of the fall energy is absorbed by each intermediate support are also known. The present invention is suitable for use with all of these systems provided that suitable known means for preventing or controlling movement of the safety line 1 through the intermediate support 2 is added.

In the described embodiment the traveller body is arranged to be biased automatically into an orientation where the slot 24 is vertically below the safety line 1 and the arm 5 of the support 2 is also arranged vertically below the safety line 1. This is the most advantageous arrangement and is particularly convenient when the safety line 1 is mounted through the supports 2 on the surface on which the users of the system will walk. However, in principle the arm 5 could be at any orientation to the safety line 1 and the present invention could be used to orient the body of the traveller 3 accordingly by suitable location of the centre of gravity of the body and the cams, wheels and guide surfaces.

The embodiment described is a preferred embodiment of the invention only and the person skilled in the art will be able to envisage alterations which can be made while remaining within the scope of the invention.

Claims:

1. A traveller for a fall arrest system comprising:
a body having a bore and a slot narrower than the bore linking the bore to the exterior of the body, and
a load member connected to the body for pivotal movement relative to the body and suitable for attachment to fall safety equipment,
the body having a centre of gravity positioned so that when the traveller is supported on a safety line passing through the bore the body will be urged by gravity to rotate about the safety line towards a position in which the slot has a predetermined orientation relative to the safety line.
2. A traveller according to claim 1 in which the predetermined orientation is the slot being located vertically below the safety line.
3. A traveller according to claim 1 or claim 2, in which the body has a guide member arranged so that when the traveller is supported on a safety line passing through the bore and the safety line is in turn supported by a support and the traveller moves towards the support the guide member can cooperate with a guide surface associated with the support to rotate the body into the predetermined orientation.
4. A traveller according to claim 3, in which the body has at least one pair of guide members at each end, each guide member of a pair being arranged so that it can cooperate with a respective guide surface to rotate the body in a different direction.

5. A support for a safety line for a fall arrest system comprising a support section having a tube suitable for retaining a safety line and attachment means for attaching the support to a structure, the supporting section and attachment means being connected by an arm narrower than the tube, and further comprising a guide surface spaced apart from the arm and arranged so that when a safety line is retained in the tube and a traveller moves along the safety line towards the support the guide surface can cooperate with a guide member on a traveller to rotate the traveller about the safety line into a predetermined orientation relative to the arm.
6. A support according to claim 5, in which the support comprises two guide surfaces arranged so that each guide surface can cooperate with a respective guide member on a traveller to rotate the traveller in a different direction.
7. A fall arrest system comprising a safety line, at least one support and at least one traveller in which the support comprises a support section which retains the safety line and attachment means for attaching the support to a structure, the support section and attachment means being connected by an arm narrower than the safety line, the traveller comprises a body having a bore larger than the support section through which the safety line passes and a slot narrower than the safety line but wider than the arm and linking the bore to the exterior of the body, and a load member connected to the body for pivotal movement relative to the body and suitable for attachment to fall safety equipment,

the body having a centre of gravity positioned so that when the body is mounted on the safety line the body is urged by gravity to rotate about the safety line towards a position in which the slot is in line with the arm.

8. A system according to claim 7 in which the slot and arm are vertically below the safety line.
9. A system according to claim 6 or claim 7, in which the body has a guide member and the support has a guide surface, the guide member and guide surface being arranged to cooperate when the traveller moves along the safety line towards the support to rotate the body into a position in which the slot is in line with the arm.
10. A system according to claim 9, in which the body has at least one pair of guide members at each end, and the support has two guide surfaces and each guide member of a pair cooperates with a respective guide surface to rotate the body in a different direction.
11. A system according to claim 9 or claim 10, in which the or each guide surface is spaced apart from the arm.
12. Apparatus according to any one of claims 1 to 4 or 7 to 11 in which the body also has a catch able to selectively move between a closed position in which a safety line cannot pass through the slot and an open position in which a safety line can pass through the slot.

13. Apparatus according to claim 12 when dependent on one of claims 7 to 11 in which, when the catch is in the closed position the slot is narrower than the safety line but wider than the arm and when the catch is in the open position the slot is wider than the safety line.

14. Apparatus according to any one of claim 3, 4 or 9 to 11 in which the or each guide member is a cam member fixed to the body.

15. Apparatus according to any one of claim 3, 4 or 9 to 11 in which the or each guide member is a wheel.

16. Apparatus according to any one of claims 1 to 4 or 7 to 15 in which the bore is circular in section and the load member is connected to the body for pivotal movement about the axis of the bore.

17. A system according to claim 10 in which the guide members cooperate with the guide surfaces to lift the body upwards from the safety line.

18. A system according to claim 17 in which the guide members cooperate with the guide surfaces to lift the body upwards until the bore is aligned with the supporting section.

19. A system according to any one of claims 7 to 11, 17 or 18 in which the support section comprises a tube suitable for retaining the safety line.

20. A traveller for a fall arrest system substantially as shown in or as described with reference to the accompanying figures.
21. A support for a safety line for a fall arrest system substantially as shown in or as described with reference to the accompanying figures.
22. A fall arrest system substantially as shown in or as described with reference to the accompanying figures.



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Application No: GB 0111567.4
Claims searched: 1 - 4

Examiner: J D Cantrell
Date of search: 11 September 2001

Patents Act 1977 Search Report under Section 17

Databases searched:

UK Patent Office collections, including GB, EP, WO & US patent specifications, in:

UK CI (Ed.S): E1S: SL

Int CI (Ed.7): E04D E04G A62B

Other: ON-LINE: EPODOC, PAJ, WPI

Documents considered to be relevant:

| Category | Identity of document and relevant passage | Relevant to claims |
|----------|---|--------------------|
| X | EP 0608164 A PROTECTA | 1,3,4 |

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